

*Dutch  
Brazil - Guiana*

# GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

Published By  
The American Geographical Society Vol XXX  
of New York PP 490-491

*Note in the*  
SOUTH AMERICA (July 1940 issue) No. 3

"Demarcation of the Southern Boundary of Surinam. Until a few years ago the southern boundary of Surinam (Dutch Guiana) on even the best and most detailed maps was little more than an imaginary line. On many maps this line was embellished with the symbol for a mountain range, the Tumuc-Humac Mountains, supposed to mark the divide between the Amazon basin and the basins of the rivers that flow northward to the Guiana coast. During the years 1935 to 1938 Dutch and Brazilian commissions demarcated the exact boundary along the actual divide (A.J.H. van Lynden and others: *Op zoek naar Suriname's suidgrens: De grensbepaling tusschen Suriname en Brazilië*, 1935-1938, Tijdschr. Kon. Nederl. Aardrijksk. Genootschap, Ser. 2, Vol. 56, 1939, pp. 793-882). In cooperation with British and French commissions the Dutch commission also determined parts of the southwestern and southeastern boundaries of the province (see H. Carington Smith: *On the Frontier of British Guiana and Brazil*, *Geogr. Journ.*, Vol. 92, 1938, pp. 40-54).

The Dutch-Brazilian boundary turned out to be exceedingly tortuous. The distance between the westernmost and easternmost points is only 200 kilometers as a bird flies, but the boundary itself is 597 kilometers long - hardly a practical line, and one not easy to determine. Several times after proceeding for many miles with measurements the Dutch expedition would suddenly find themselves above a river junction and would have to go back to hunt for the point where they had unwittingly left the main divide. In places swampy areas made it exceedingly difficult to locate the boundary.

The records of the expeditions dispose for good of the mythical Tumuc-Humac Range. Altitudes on the boundary as given on the maps accompanying the reports range from 350 to 800 meters above sea level. The divide does not follow a continuous ridge of higher land; in fact, in many places it seems deliberately to avoid all the higher points of land! Only in the east does something like a mountain area exist; but even here, both in Surinam and in Brazil, there are many mountains as high as, or higher than, the highest points on the divide. Everywhere the bedrock seemed to consist of granite. Most of the higher granite mountains are bald-topped, and the slopes are steepest near the base.

One of the chief difficulties of the expedition was the necessity of carrying practically all the food. Most of the work was done in uninhabited country covered with a dense tropical

forest that offered few edible plant products: occasionally they found a Brazil-nut tree, a mope tree, or some wild honey. There was a little game: some birds, wild pigs, and two or three other edible or semi-edible animals. All supplies had to be brought up by river--very difficult work, since all Surinam rivers have numerous falls and rapids (soela's), frequently close to the source. Only the lighter types of native boat made by the Boschnegers could be used. These corials or dugouts, are from 6 to 8 meters long and can carry about 600 kilograms; hence a flotilla was necessary. Even these relatively small canoes had to be unloaded and sometimes carried at the falls.

By far the greater part of the boundary was found to lie in an immense tropical forest. A narrow path was cut along the divide, cement markers were put up at intervals, and every 30 kilometers astronomical observations were made, for which considerable clearing often had to be done. In only one place, near the southwest end of the boundary about the headwaters of the Sipaliwini, was a large savana found, an extension of the Brazilian Campo Geraes. This section was rolling, with scattered higher hills, occasional swamps, and many outcrops of granite bedrock, some of which showed remarkable erosional forms.

On the whole trip very few natives were encountered: some Indians hunting in the savana and a small native population on the Upper Tapanhoni and Paloemeu.

WILLIAM VAN ROYEN "